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Edwin Wilson And the Plot To Kill Letelier

On the morning of Sept. 21, 1976, ex-CIA agent Edwin Wilson had breakfast at Washington's Mayflower Hotel with an associate and bodyguard who went by the alias of Peter Wagner.

Wilson had just returned from Geneva, where he had met with three Cuban CIA agents and, the federal government later charged, had attempted to arrange the assassination of a Libyan dissident. He said nothing of this to Wagner. But Wilson did ask his associate what he'd be doing that day and where he'd be.

Wagner replied, according to a secret House Intelligence Committee transcript, that he would be checking with two private investigators who were on a divorce case stakeout in northwest Washington. Wilson then leaned forward, Wagner said, "and advised me . . . why didn't I stay out of that area . . . and stay in the offices the rest of the day."

But Wagner ignored the advice and drove to the area to give instructions to his agents. By the time he returned to Wilson's office, the radio waves were crackling with the news

that a bomb had exploded in a car at Sheridan Circle—just two blocks from where Wagner's agents were stationed. Killed were Chilean exile leader Orlando Letelier and an American co-worker.

According to the transcripts, obtained by my associate Dale Van Atta, Wagner later joined Wilson and several other people for drinks at a local club. The occasion quickly assumed the atmosphere of a victory party. Wilson, Wagner said, "was pleased that things turned out the way they did. It was obvious to everybody at the office. That is when I really became a little leery of Ed." Wagner also recalled that he had heard Letelier's name mentioned many times around Wilson's office.

Wagner's testimony before the intelligence committee again raises an intriguing question that has hung over the Letelier murder for years: did Edwin Wilson, who recently was convicted of illegally supplying weapons to agents of Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi, know in advance of the plot to kill Letelier?

In March 1977, I reported that anti-Castro Cubans were linked to the Letelier murder. A month later, Bob Woodward of The Washington Post reported a link between Wilson and the assassination. Federal investigators first denied the allegation, but then decided to question Wilson because of his close ties to Cuban expatriates, with whom he had worked as a CIA official.

The stories that Woodward and I wrote angered Wilson, and he ordered Wagner to check out my office's security system. He soon discovered that my system was maintained by a company to which Wagner had complete access.

A source who was present when Wilson and Wagner spoke about my security system described the conversation to my associates Van Atta and Indy Badhwar. "This is perfect!" Wilson exclaimed. "I want you to figure out a way to compromise this system. Anything with my name on it in Anderson's office, I want destroyed." As luck would have it, I switched to a different security firm about this time, and Wagner couldn't get into my office.

Footnote: Through his attorney, Wilson claimed he had never heard of Letelier before his assassination. Wilson also said he had never planned to break into my office.

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